

To: Adm13McCarthy, Gina[Adm13McCarthy.Gina@epa.gov]; Purchia, Liz[Purchia.Liz@epa.gov];
Beauvais, Joel[Beauvais.Joel@epa.gov]
From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Sun 2/14/2016 2:59:13 PM
Subject: Albany times Union

LeBrun: Shamless dodging in midst of Hoosick Falls water crisis

Fred LeBrun

Published 8:27 pm, Saturday, February 13, 2016

Finally, we sense a favorable turnaround for residents of Hoosick Falls, ignored victims for generations of dangerously tainted drinking water.

State government and its health and enforcement agencies have been finally shamed into acknowledging the severity of the potential consequences.

Now they are acting with an uncommon speed that such severity demands. Sad to say, sometimes it takes a media circus to get politicians to behave properly.

On Friday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the village will get \$10 million for charcoal filtration systems for private wells in the village that show toxic contamination with an ammonium salt of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), used in the manufacturing process of specialty plastics by a series of companies in Hoosick Falls since the early 1950s.

[This is a TU+ story. Click for more information.](#)

The state is advancing the money which it expects to recover from some of the responsible parties.

The day before, the Department of Environmental Conservation served notice to both Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, current owners of the facilities, and Honeywell that they are deemed among others as responsible parties,

initiating consent orders that should bring resources in terms of clean up, and perhaps more importantly, a new municipal water supply.

The current municipal system is heavily contaminated and off limits for drinking and cooking — and unsurprisingly is right next to Saint-Gobain's processing towers and stacks that spewed spent PFOA until about a decade ago.

How dumb is that, a community water supply right next to a plastics plant, still using chemistry in its manufacturing that may prove as toxic as PFOA.

So that's right at the top of remediation needed to make it right, and soon — finding a new source of municipal water that is not tainted, paid for by the responsible parties.

The good news is the area appears blessed with good systems of aquifers to tap into.

On Friday, Hoosick Falls high school students made a brilliant, emotional appeal to the governor for a new water system.

"How do you not get emotional when you've been drinking poisoned water for so many years?" asked high school senior Anna Wysocki.

And how do you not get livid at how the state Health Department patronized those justifiable concerns and all but dismissed the dangers of PFOA up until December when they got slapped up side the face by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

For a solid year, from a year ago January when the town physician, Dr. Marcus Martinez, called for shutting down the municipal water supply which had tested hot for PFOA, and December when EPA Region 2 director Judith Enck declared the tainted municipal water unfit to drink or use, the Health Department wallowed between incompetence and willful ignorance, maintaining the water was fine to drink and use without any health consequences.

Something you might expect from a third-world country.

When they recently had to begrudgingly acknowledge there might be a problem with the water and health, they tried to excuse the inexcusable by claiming PFOA was unregulated and its health consequences still unclear. A word on both those ridiculous dodges.

There are only a relative couple of handfuls of regulated toxic compounds

among the tens of thousands used in industry that are known toxins and that kill or hurt you badly.

You are just as dead whether it's regulated or not, and regulated is a political designation, not a scientific one. Industry lobbyists in Washington are quite successful in keeping regulated compounds to a minimum. If the Health Department only reacts to regulated toxins, they'll have lots of time on their hands for paperbacks.

As for the claim of questionable health consequences, that dodge is shameless. Since the C-8 peer reviewed scientific studies on PFOA were wrapped up in 2012, there has been a staggering amount of verified information easily available on the health dangers of the chemistry, right down to probability tables for increased numbers of common and oddball cancers depending on the level of PFOA found in blood work.

Which means, of course, it is critical everyone who drank the water get their blood tested.

The practical use is with the C-8 tables available, physicians knowing the blood levels of their patients can keep an eagle eye out for sometimes difficult to diagnose cancers, and other consequences, such as compromised immune systems.

Which brings us to job 2 for proper remediation of the Hoosick Falls debacle.

Before widespread filtration systems are put in place it is critical there be a meeting of the minds among state and federal health officials on what the acceptable level of PFOA should be in the water. The current EPA designated of 100 parts per trillion or ppt is a whole lot better than the 50,000 ppt the Health Department was advocating, but not good enough.

New Jersey has it down to 40 ppt. But even at that level emerging research is showing that some vaccines in children, such as for tetanus and diphtheria, don't take. One scientist I know says 10 ppt would be a good political and scientific compromise.

Whatever it is, it is doable with current and affordable technology.

Charcoal filtration systems work extremely well with PFOA, at least until they clog and have to be cleaned.

The political response to the plight of Hoosick Falls has been depressingly predictable.

The governor praising his health department and trying to deflect any hard look at how and why they screwed up. Senate Majority leader John Flanagan wants the problems fixed before any hearings on what went wrong. Why? What has one got to do with the other? The astounding aspect of Flanagan's reaction is that you hardly see the strings from his arms and flapping mouth attached to the governor's office.

Fortunately, two of the most respected members of the Assembly, Richard Gottfried and Steve Engelbright, will be holding hearings on statewide water quality in April, with an emphasis on Hoosick Falls.

We have high hopes for these hearings.